

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method for manufacturing a glass article having a length of 1000 mm or more, comprising:

a first heating step comprising: vertically inserting a soot preform synthesized by a vapor phase synthesis method into a furnace; and, after vertically inserting the soot perform, reducing a pressure in the furnace to a reduced pressure of 10 Pa or less followed by heating the soot preform to a temperature range of 1000°C to 1300°C ~~1400°C~~ inclusive ~~in at the a reduced pressure atmosphere~~ reduced pressure so as to remove the gas remaining in the soot preform while effecting thermal shrinkage;

a second heating step comprising heating the soot preform so as to vitrify the soot preform while the temperature at the surface of the soot preform is controlled within the range of 1400°C to 1440°C for a predetermined period of 70 minutes or more; and

a step of cooling the glass article,

wherein the first heating step further comprises a thermal shrinking step of heating to a temperature range of 1300°C to 1400°C in a predetermined vacuum level of 10 Pa or less.

2. (Cancelled).

3. (Cancelled).

4. (Original) A method for manufacturing a glass article according to Claim 1, wherein the furnace is provided with a heater having a plurality of segments whose temperatures

are independently controllable in the longitudinal direction such that the temperature of the soot preform can be controlled correspondingly in a plurality of parts in the longitudinal direction.

5. (Original) A method of manufacturing a glass article according to Claim 1, wherein, during each of the heating steps, a temperature at a furnace tube which separates a heater and the soot preform is determined and the temperature in each step is controlled based on the determined temperatures.

6. (Original) A method of manufacturing a glass article according to Claim 1, wherein, the soot preform is a composite preform comprising a transparent glass rod and a porous glass portion formed around the glass rod.

7. (Original) A method for manufacturing a glass article according to Claim 1, wherein, during the second heating step, the temperature at the surface of the soot preform is gradually or stepwise increased from the upper section toward the lower section.

8. (Cancelled)